May 3 Ballot Language

“This millage would renew for five (5) years the previous .4 mill levy which expires on November 11, 2011, for the operation of the Macatawa Area Express Transportation Authority.

“Shall the limitation on the amount of taxes which may be assessed against all non-exempt real and personal property (both homestead and non-homestead) in the district of the Macatawa Area Express (MAX) Transportation Authority (whose geographic boundaries are coterminous with those of the City of Holland and Holland Charter Township) be increased in the amount of .4 mills ($0.40 on each $1,000) on taxable property value for a period of five (5) years, 2012 through 2016, inclusive, to provide funds to enable the Authority to provide, operate, and maintain services for public transportation under MCL 124.451, et seq., including, but not limited to the ownership of vehicles and real and personal property, and shall the Authority be authorized to levy such tax? If the millage is approved and levied, it is estimated that it will result in revenues of $890,000.00 being collected by the Authority in the 2012 calendar year.”

Five Year Accomplishments 2006-2011

• Created a multi-modal hub and transfer center at the Padnos Center. This center serves Amtrak, Indian Trails and MAX Transit.
• Expanded the fixed bus routes from 3 to 8
• Increased ridership 66%
• Maintained services with no fixed route fare increases, despite revenue declines
• Provided free fixed route rides for seniors and ADA passengers
• Implemented a new Information Technology System (ITS) with mobile data computers for greater efficiencies and cost savings
• Assumed direct control of operations for $400,000 in cost savings
• Secured state and federal capital grants to update our fleet with 19 new vehicles
What is the transit millage issue on the May 3 ballot?

The May 3 ballot asks voters in the City of Holland and Holland Charter Township for a renewal of the current millage rate of 0.40 mills over five (5) years to continue funding the local public transit system. The first millage of 0.40 mills was approved by voters in November 2006. The current millage is scheduled to expire in November 2011.

What will the millage cost me?

The millage rate of 0.40 mills equals 40 cents for each $1,000 of taxable property value. This means a property with a taxable value of $100,000 would pay about $40 each year for five (5) years if the full tax were levied.

Is this a new or additional tax?

No. The millage request is a renewal of the existing millage rate approved by voters in November 2006.

Where does MAX get funding to operate the bus service?

MAX’s operating budget totals $3.6 million. The local millage provides about 23% of total revenue. State and federal funding account for approximately 36% and 32% of MAX’s revenue, respectively. Passenger fares make up about 6% of revenue. The remaining 3% of revenues come from the City of Zeeland for services, advertising billboard leasing, and investment interest.

How much money will the millage raise to fund bus service?

It is estimated that 0.40 mills will generate about $890,000 in revenue to fund MAX’s services. However, as property values decline, so does the amount of money raised by the millage. State and federal funding for MAX also is decreasing to historic lows. This makes it challenging for the Authority to maintain the current level of services.

Who uses the MAX transit system? And where are they going?

People from all ages and socioeconomic backgrounds ride MAX. About 10% are students, 10% are seniors, and 32% are persons with disabilities. The remainder are able-bodied adults. Surveys indicate about 40% of all passengers ride the MAX to go to work, and 60% take the bus to shop. So they are either riding the bus to make money, or spend money, both of which stimulate our local economy.

How many people use MAX?

Last year, the MAX provided nearly 340,000 rides to area residents. As the price of gas increases, we anticipate double-digit increases in ridership as more residents look for less costly transportation options. In the last five years, ridership has increased by 66%!

How does the MAX transit system benefit our community and economy?

There are social, economic, environmental and financial benefits to public transportation. Our community benefits by giving residents a low-cost transportation option for connecting with work, school, family and friends, shopping and recreational activities. Transit makes the greater Holland/Zeeland area a “livable city.” Transit systems are often viewed as a necessary amenity to businesses or families looking to relocate to a community. Regular use of public transit also reduces harmful emissions from single occupant vehicles that destroy our protective ozone, and promotes cleaner air and fuel conservation.

Economic models show that every $1 invested in public transit generates $6 in direct economic returns. Bus passengers benefit directly by saving up to $9,000 annually by not owning, fueling and maintaining a personal vehicle. The savings from using public transit increase as the price of gas increases.